



Town of Mansfield

Department of Finance

To: Matt Hart, Town Manager
From: Cherie Trahan, Director
CC: Fred Baruzzi, Superintendent of Schools
Date: January 3, 2013
Re: Citizen Questions at December 17, 2012 Special Town Council Meeting

At the Special Town Council meeting on December 17, 2012, a number of questions were raised during the Public Comment period. Below is a recap of the questions recorded and a brief response to each.

1. The construction rate has been identified as 62.14%, what is the actual reimbursement rate when the square footage penalty and other factors are taken into account?

Response: The square footage penalty calculation is detailed on Newfield Construction's Total Project Cost Analysis. The estimated net State reimbursement as a percentage of the *total project budget* is as follows:

New Goodwin site school	45.2%
New Vinton site school	44.9%
Middle School alterations	49.0%

Note – *Preliminary* 2012/13 reimbursement percentages from the State reflect Mansfield at a 75.36% reimbursement on the 20%-80% scale. So we should see a slight increase (from 62.14% to 65.36%) in our reimbursement rates once the State finalizes its projections. This would also be adjusted for the square footage penalty.

2. The financing plan shows revenue projections for Storrs Center of \$500,000. Is not this figure only realized after the completion of Market Square, Phase 1C and the layoff of the additional public works personnel hired for the construction phase of the project?

Response: The revenue projections include the market area and Phase 1C with revenues for these two projects beginning in FY 2014/15. Fully taxable property is expected in FY 2015/16. These are net revenues after all municipal costs are taken into account. Salaries for temporary inspection workers used during construction are

covered by one time permit revenues, and these temporary positions will no longer be necessary when construction is complete.

3. The financing plan shows the mill rate for the school building project. What would the impact be on the mill rate if all the identified future CIP projects are also undertaken?

Response: These estimates were provided under the “concurrent construction” scenario, but have not been calculated for the various staggered construction options.

4. How does the cost per square foot used by Mr. Lawrence in tonight’s presentation (\$400-\$450) compared to a previously used figure of \$800-\$900 for a renovate like new project?

Response: The cost estimates prepared by Newfield Construction for any repair, refurbishing, alterations and Renovations Like New projects were done based on the specific scope of work to be done, NOT on a square foot basis for the entire school. We are unable to identify a cost per square foot of \$800-\$900, as referenced in this question, in our presentations. Since this issue was raised, we have divided the Total Project Budget by the existing + new square feet resulting in the following:

School	Vinton	Goodwin	Southeast
Total Project Budget	\$19,909,284	\$21,493,268	\$24,651,486
Square Feet (Existing +New)	48,694 sf	54,194 sf	51,119 sf
Total Project Cost/S.F.	\$408.86	\$396.60	\$482.24

The \$800-\$900 per square foot cost is nearly twice what the design and construction team has been using for the entire duration of our work.

For the NEW school projects, the estimates were based on a square foot basis using the most recent experience Newfield Construction has found in the market for similar school building projects. This is typically done because all of the materials and systems can be estimated on a unit basis using historical figures and the fact everything will be new.

5. Did the 2008 study of the schools include an analysis of the structural soundness of the existing buildings?

Response: A cursory review of the existing condition of the structures was done. A detailed structural analysis as would be required under the renovation like new regulations has not been done. There were no additional hazardous materials testing performed specific to the 2008 report. The report is limited to what was known from previous hazardous materials testing. Therefore, the presence of PCB’s is unknown at this time.

6. Has anyone done a study of the school systems that have applied for variances from the state guidelines and what they have been granted?

Response: This has not been done. Each school system making an application for an exemption or variance from State guidelines would most likely have to appeal to the Commissioner of Education or to introduce special legislation with their unique condition or situation.

7. Will the school building project drive up our cost per student significantly?

Response: No. It should actually reduce our per student cost as the operating costs of the building will be less than what it is for the current buildings. The buildings are town-owned, and the debt service is paid from the Town General Fund and is not included in the per student cost calculation.

8. What is the specific reference which identifies \$400-\$450 per square foot as the standard?

Response: This can be found in the Conn. State Dept. of Education "School Construction Projects: Guidelines for Applying for Renovation Status", specifically the "Cost Analysis for Proposed Renovation Projects". See the following link: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/dgm/sfu/forms/renovationcostanalysis.pdf>

9. Is there a chart showing the breakdown of the square footage in each school?

Response: Square footages are noted in the floor-plans of each of the schools in the 2008 study by The Lawrence Associates.

10. Why does the Town have so much more square footage than the state allows for reimbursement purposes?

Response: The State square footage standards have not been updated to our knowledge for the past 27+ years. Clearly in this time, there have been many changes in teaching techniques, equipment and required programs. The original preliminary design of the schools was based on a survey of teachers and administrators with regards to programmatic needs. At the request of the Town Council to reduce the overall cost of the new schools proposal, size reductions were made for the more recent estimates.

11. Is the one mile circle radius from the census the reason you are choosing to close Southeast?

Response: The Council has endorsed the Goodwin and Vinton locations in a preliminary fashion. All three elementary school sites have adequate well and septic capacity and are otherwise feasible locations for a 375-student school. (The Town would need to purchase additional land at the Goodwin location in order to build a new school while the current facility stays open.)

The Council reviewed a variety of criteria in assessing the three locations, including the School Siting Considerations analysis that is referenced. This analysis is a means to identify where people live, particularly families with young children, where development can occur, proximity to transportation infrastructure and related factors.

The one-mile radius was recommended by the Town's professional planning staff as a means to assess density, walkability and other criteria. For example, if the community wants to locate a school in an area where there is population density, potential for growth or where it can promote walking to school, a one-mile radius is an acceptable distance or metric. The staff understands the point that the potential for development is limited within a one-mile radius of Southeast School due to the proximity to Mansfield Hollow but that factor or limitation is part of what the analysis is intended to demonstrate. To put it more simply, while the eastern part of Mansfield has potential for low-density residential growth (e.g. a single-family home on a 2-acre lot) it does not have the same population density, potential for mixed use development or medium-high residential growth, or proximity to transportation infrastructure that exists in other parts of town. Interesting, a few years ago the Town applied for funding to build a pedestrian walkway from Southeast to Mansfield Center, but did not receive the grant.

It is also important to note that the School Siting Considerations analysis was one piece of data that the Council used in its decision to endorse, in a preliminary fashion, the Goodwin and Vinton locations. As various Councilors have discussed, some members were motivated by a desire to locate a school at Goodwin in order to help stabilize that area of town, where several single-family homes in traditional neighborhoods have converted to student rental properties. This conversion process can negatively impact the quality of life in these traditional neighborhoods and a school is seen as a stabilizing influence to attract and retain families with young children.

For the Vinton location, Council members were motivated by a desire to retain the only municipal or civic use in that area of town. In Storrs, the community has the Beck Municipal Building, EO Smith High School, the Community Center and the Senior Center as municipal or civic uses. In the Mansfield Center/Southeast area, the Town has the Public Library, the Southeast playing fields, the Lions Club athletic complex and, to a lesser extent, the transfer station. In the southwest portion of town, Vinton School is the only municipal or civic use and some Council members saw the preservation of that asset as a priority.

To reiterate, all three elementary school locations are suitable sites for a new 375-student school. One can construct strong arguments in favor of the Southeast location and many people have done that.